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HISTORY

OF THE

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REBEL STEAM RAM  
"ATLANTA,"

Now on Exhibition at Foot of Washington Street,

For the **BENEFIT** of the

Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon,

PHILADELPHIA,

With an interesting account of the Engagement which  
resulted in her capture.

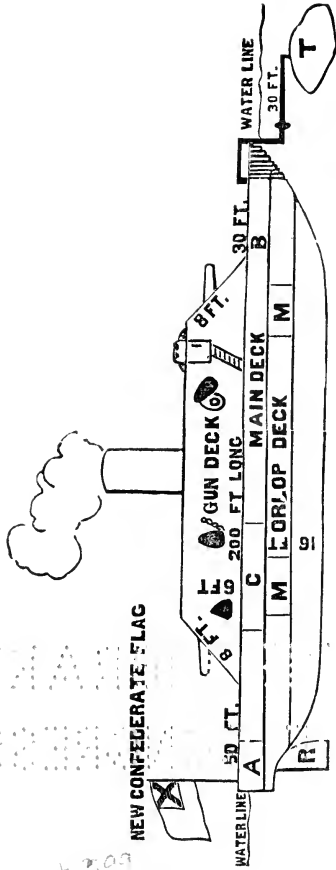
THE LANCET

NOVEMBER, 1863.

OF LONDON

Printed by GEO. H. IVES, N. E. Corner of Walnut and Dock Streets.

# DIAGRAM OF THE REBEL RAM "ATLANTA,"



M—Magazines.

B—Officers' Quarter—Ward Room.

R—Rudder, (out of sight.)

A—Captain's Cabin. C—Steerage Officers.

T—Torpedo.

Now on Exhibition at the Foot of Washington Street,

For the Benefit of the

UNION VOLUNTEER REFRESHMENT SALOON.



# HISTORY OF THE REBEL RAM

## “ATLANTA,”

Now on Exhibition at Foot of Washington St.,

For the **BENEFIT** of the


Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon.

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It gives us great pleasure to announce that we have procured the Rebel Ram “ATLANTA,” from the United States Government, for a short period, to gratify the public curiosity, and to add to our fund, which we expect will be heavily taxed for the next few months, by the passing troops.

This ship is reported to have been built by the voluntary sale of Jewelry of Southern Ladies, at a cost of \$1,500,000. So confident were they of her success in capturing the Monitors sent against her, that numbers of these misguided daughters of the South, accompanied her in two steamboats. to the scene of conflict, expecting to return with her captured antagonists, the proceedings to wind up with a grand Ball in honor of her success.

They will be doubtless gratified to learn that the “Atlanta” is now doing a noble work, in replenishing the funds of an Institution organized for the purpose of feeding Union Soldiers.

 We are indebted to Mr. ROBERT S. DAVIS, of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, who was at Port Royal at the time of her capture, for the following History of this vessel, which will be read with interest.

COMMITTEE OF THE UNION REFRESHMENT SALOON.

*Special Correspondence of the Inquirer.*

PORT ROYAL, S. C., June 19, 1863.

Now that the smoke of the late brilliant naval action in this vicinity has cleared away and the "Atlanta," flying the "Stars and Stripes," is riding safely at anchor in this harbor, within hailing distance of the "Wabash" and other respectable United States sea-dogs, I am able from a personal inspection of the craft, as well as from an account which I have gathered from eye-witnesses, to furnish your readers with an intelligible description of the capture of the "Atlanta" by the "Weehawken." And first, we may as well settle the nativity of said vessel, as much discussion has already arisen here as to whether she is, or was, the "Fingal," the "Georgia," or the "Atlanta."

### SHE IS ALL THREE.

You will recollect, that upon the 12th of November, 1861, the "Fingal," an English, Clyde-built steamer, ran the blockade, and carried a valuable cargo of arms and ammunition in to the Rebels at Savannah. She had aboard of her also, several batteries of the celebrated Blakeley guns, which the Rebels immediately mounted in Fort Pulaski, and which fell into our hands when we captured that fort. In the following January the Rebels having loaded the "Fingal" with a cargo of one thousand bales of cotton, endeavored to re-run the blockade, but were detected by our cruisers, and driven back up the Savannah river. After this occurrence the idea seemed to occur to them that the "Fingal" might be converted into an iron-clad, and to this result they have industriously devoted themselves for the last fourteen months. After she was near completion her name was changed to the "Georgia," and subsequently she received a new christening as the "Atlanta," which name she has borne for over six months.

### ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE TO SEA.

From a perusal of her log-book, which was captured, together with her other valuables, I learn, by an entry made on the 24th day of January, 1863, that the "Atlanta" then having been fully completed was ordered to engage our blockading squadron and Fort Pulaski, and in the general fire run out to sea. In accordance with this programme she was fully manned and equipped for her voyage, and her sides slushed for action. But Admiral Dupont having been advised of this intended movement, by deserters from Savannah, immediately adopted such precautions that the "Atlanta's" officers, seeing that their plans had been betrayed, immediately gave up their adventure although their craft was in sight both of the blockading fleet and Pulaski. She returned to Savannah, and attempted nothing serious until lately, which adventure is the subject of the present letter.

### PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE AT SAVANNAH.

On the 7th instant it was announced that the "Atlanta" was about to achieve the most signal victory of the war, and properly christen the newly adopted Confederate flag. The people in Savannah were jubilant, and assembled *en masse* upon the wharves to bid her a suitable farewell. The "Atlanta," owing to her drawing fifteen feet of water when loaded for the intended cruise, and St. Augustine's Creek not being deep enough to float her in this condition, she only took on board her crew at Savannah, and steamed down the river, drawing but eleven feet of water. Her provisions and stores followed her upon some gun-boats belonging to Tatnall's musquito

fleet, and when she had successfully passed through St. Augustine's Creek, which runs from Cranston's Bluff to the head of the Wilmington river, she then received on board all her stores, provisions, ammunition &c., and was made ready for action. It occupied six days in getting her down safely from Savannah to the head of Wilmington river.

#### HOW WE KNEW SHE WAS COMING.

We were fully apprised of this intended excursion by deserters who, from time to time, have escaped from the "Atlanta," and unbosomed their hearts to Admiral Dupont. From these chivalric sons Admiral Dupont learned that the "Atlanta" was about to assume the offensive, and imitate her worthy predecessor, the "Merrimac." Accordingly, ten days ago he sent the "Weehawken," Captain John Rodgers commanding, and the "Nahant," Commander Downs, to watch the "Atlanta," and give her every satisfaction which she might demand. The "Weehawken" and "Nahant" proceeded to Wassaw Sound, and took up their positions near the mouth of the Wilmington river, which empties into this Sound.

#### THE "ATLANTA" STEAMS INTO SIGHT.

Captain Rodgers stationed a picket-boat every night up the river, in order that he might not be taken unawares, and the two Monitors rode at anchor, anxiously awaiting an introduction to their mutual enemy. On the morning of the 17th the picket-boat, as was its wont, had returned to the "Weehawken," and the men having reported no suspicious-looking steamer, turned into their bunks, where the rest of the crew were already enjoying themselves in a sleep undisturbed, except, perhaps, by the vision of a sinking ram. When the picket returned it was about 5 o'clock, A. M., and hardly had they bunked before the "Atlanta" was seen coming down the river, some three miles distant. She was coming at a rapid rate, and was followed by two wooden gun-boats.

#### THE MONITORS PREPARE FOR ACTION.

No time was to be lost, and the Monitors were ready for action in less time than I can describe it. Owing to its being flood-tide the Monitors were not "bow on," that is, their sterns were toward the "Atlanta," and it was necessary for proper action that they should turn around and face the enemy. For fear, on account of the shallowness of the water, that he might run aground in executing this manœuvre, Captain Rodgers steamed down the Sound, as also did the "Nahant," to deep water, and having successfully turned, he steamed up with all haste to meet the "Atlanta," which was coming down upon him with full speed, intending, beyond a doubt, fight.

#### WHAT THE "ATLANTA" PROPOSED TO DO.

In order that you may fully appreciate the sequel to this Rebel adventure, I will here, while the "Atlanta" and the Monitors are approaching each other, narrate, as I have it from the officers themselves, the object and intention of their expedition. The following was their plan:—They were fully aware of the presence of the "Weehawken" and the "Nahant" in Wassaw Sound, but they intended to engage these Monitors, and having captured them, to send them up in tow of their gun-boats to Savannah. If, on engaging our Monitors, they found themselves unable to whip and capture them, then they intended to run past them and put out to sea. Having gained the ocean, they were to proceed immediately to Charleston harbor, and engage the blockading fleet there in conjunction with the Rebel rams at Charleston, which were to come down to our fleet upon certain signals, which had already been agreed upon, being made by the "Atlanta."

Our blockaders having been annihilated, the "Atlanta" and her consorts would proceed to Wilmington and raise our blockade there in a similar manner. After these important victories had been gained, then an indiscriminate raid upon the Northern sea-board towns and cities was to be made, and general havoc ensue upon the land and sea. This was their intention; let us see how

"The best laid schemes of men and mice, gang aft aglee."

But before detailing the engagement I would, for the amusement of your female readers, state that the two wooden gun-boats which accompanied the "Atlanta" were crowded with Savannah ladies, who had come down to see the abominable Yankees receive a severe castigation, and wave their perfumed cambrics at the victorious "Atlanta" as she proudly steamed out to sea covered with glory, while they would escort back to Savannah our disabled Monitors.

### THE "ATLANTA" OPENS THE BALL.

But we left the "Atlanta" steaming down upon our Monitors, while the latter, especially the "Weehawken," were making counter advances. The "Nahant," for some reason or other, did not seem to get along very well, and the "Weehawken" soon left her some distance astern. The "Atlanta," when she arrived within six hundred yards of the "Weehawken," ran aground, but succeeded in immediately backing off and regaining her course. But again, as if some strange fatality attended her, she ran aground the second time, and in this condition opened fire upon the "Weehawken," which was then within four hundred yards of her. Our officers, however, did not know that the "Atlanta" was aground until the action was over.—The first shot which the "Atlanta" fired was from her pivot gun, but it fell short of the "Weehawken," and demonstrated that the gunner who sighted that shot was a novice in the art.

### THE "WEEHAWKEN" IS COURTEOUS AS USUAL.

Captain Rodgers himself, anxious as ever for a good beginning, sighted his fifteen-inch gun, loaded with a solid shot, and away went this huge missile against the shutter of the starboard aft port-hole, and shivering it as well as the iron and wood-work adjoining, fell off into the water without doing further injury. The "Atlanta," in reply, fired another shot from her pivot-gun, which, like its predecessor, fell short.

Captain Rodgers again sighted his fifteen-inch pet, and the solid shot hurled through the air, carrying away, in its fearful passage, the top of the pilot house of the "Atlanta." The falling iron and wood work wounded severely two out of the three pilots, so that the "Atlanta" was not only with but one pilot, but also minus her pilot-house covering.

Nothing daunted, however, she returned the fire from her fore starboard gun, but alas for the aim, the shot failed to hit the "Weehawken." Rodgers again sighted, and grazed the wreck of the pilot-house. The "Atlanta" did not return the fire, and again the "Weehawken" sent forth a fifteen-inch which went completely through the "Atlanta's" smoke stack. To this the "Atlanta" replied with her pivot-gun, and her shot fell within two feet of the "Weehawken." When within a hundred yards of the Rebel craft Captain Rodgers, wishing to encourage such a laudable ambition on the part of the "Atlanta's" guns, sighted his gun for the fifth shot, and crash went the solid fifteen-inch ball against the "Atlanta's" side, just aft of the starboard fore port hole. You can judge of the velocity of this shot when I tell you that it completely bent in a wrought iron armor four inches thick, and

shivered into fragments a twelve-inch thickness of live oak plank, and a six-inch thickness of Georgia pine plank. These flying fragments struck the men working the larboard fore gun, killing one and wounding thirteen of them. The force of the blow was so great that every man working the pivot-gun fell to the deck completely stunned. The ball itself rolled off from the "Atlanta's" side and fell into the water.

#### THE "ATLANTA" SHOWS THE WHITE FLAG.

This last shot of the "Weehawken" caused all visions of the blockade, Charleston and Wilmington, to rapidly fade from the mental vision of the "Atlanta's" officers, and immediately the white flag was seen waving from the wreck of her pilot-house. The action was only of fifteen minutes' duration, and she fell a prize to the "Weehawken's" prowess in twenty-six minutes from the time she appeared in sight; and as the white flag fluttered from her deck, the Savannah Ladies were seen rapidly going up Wilmington river to bear to the people of Savannah not the glorious news of victory, but the sad tidings of defeat.

#### DETAILS OF THE SURRENDER.

Upon seeing the white flag our men cheered most lustily, and Captain Rodgers immediately dispatched Captain Harmony, of the "Weehawken," in a small boat, to the "Atlanta," to receive her commander's sword and to take possession of her in the name of the Navy of the United States. As soon as Captain Harmony arrived on board he received the sword of Captain Webb; hauled down the new Confederate flag which was flying at her stern, and ran up our own victorious ensign. He then went forward, and was ordering his men to cast anchor, when Captain Webb exclaimed, "for God's sake, Captain, don't cast off these anchors, we have a torpedo underneath this bow." Captain Harmony turned to him with the utmost *nonchalance* and said, "I don't care anything about your torpedoes, I can stand them if you can, and if you don't wish to be blown up with me, you had better tell me how to raise the torpedo."

To this Captain Webb readily assented, and calling some of his men, pulleys were attached to a large iron rod which ran out from the prow, and soon there appeared coming out of the water a huge torpedo attached to the end of this rod, which projected twenty feet beyond the bow. Captain Harmony ordered his men to carefully remove the cap from the torpedo and then fill it with water, in order that the powder might be destroyed. This was done, and the torpedo, holding fifty pounds of powder, was raised aloft on this rod, and was secured at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the deck.

#### THE OFFICERS OF THE "ATLANTA."

A remarkable circumstance in this affair is the fact that Captain William Webb, formerly a Lieutenant in our Navy and commanding the "Atlanta," is an old schoolmate of Captain John Rodgers, who commands the "Weehawken." Captain Harmony also found that the other officers were old and intimate acquaintances of his before the Rebellion occurred. I have no doubt but that these discoveries lent an additional zest to the victory.

#### SPEECH OF CAPTAIN WEBB.

Captain Webb, after surrendering his vessel, summoned the crew on deck, and addressed them as follows:—"I have surrendered our vessel because circumstances over which I had no control, have compelled me to do so. I know that you started upon this expedition with high hopes, and you have been disappointed. I most earnestly wish it had happened otherwise but

Providence, for some good reason, has interfered with our plans, and we have failed of success. You all know that if we had not run aground the result would have been different, and now that a regard for your lives has influenced me in this surrender, I would advise you to submit quietly to the fate which has overtaken us. I hope that we may all soon be returned to our homes and meet again in a common brotherhood."

At the conclusion of this speech, Captain Webb became so effected that he fainted. What a contrast this speech presents to the one which the same man had delivered upon that same deck, to the same crew, but an hour previous, when he promised them in a grandiloquent oration, that "before breakfast we shall have in tow the Yankee Monitors."

#### THE CREW OF THE "ATLANTA."

One cannot imagine a more villainous-looking set of men than this same "Atlanta" crew. They are all Georgia "crackers," the poorest "white trash" of Georgia, without education, or anything, in fact, which would entitle them to be called men, except that they have the human form. Not one man among them is a sailor, but they are all soldiers. The officers being perfect gentlemen, compared strangely with this gang of cut-throats. The men, however, were greivously disappointed, and loudly declaimed against their ill-luck.

Fourteen officers and fifty men, including those wounded, were transferred to the steamer "Island City," and the remainder of the officers and crew were placed on board of the "Oleander." They were all brought up to this place yesterday morning, and again transferred to the United States steamship "Vermont," and the wounded properly cared for. This afternoon they were all put aboard the United States gun-boat "James Adger," which will carry them to New York. The entire crew, officers and men, number one hundred and sixty-five, and a more dejected looking set of naval heroes never trod the deck of our gun-boat before.

#### WHAT WAS FOUND ON BOARD.

Upon examining our prize Captain Rodgers found that she had an immense stock of provisions and stores. These, at the least calculation, were amply sufficient for a two month's cruise, and of the best quality. The clothing found on her was of a superior make and texture, and sufficient to keep the crew well clothed for a year. Her chronometers and sextants of which she had a large number, were very choice and valuable. The officers' quarters were fitted up very luxuriously, and revealed a well selected stock of liquors, segars, tobacco, &c. Everything about her, in fact, indicated not only that she was a pet of the Rebels, but that her unfortunate voyagers had started upon a long cruise.

#### THE ARMAMENT OF THE "ATLANTA."

The "Atlanta" is armed with four guns, one seven-inch pivot gun fore and aft and two six-inch guns on each broadside. These guns are all the Brooks' guns which, you will recollect, made such good execution against our iron-clads in the late attack on Charleston. They are also, all rifled, and throw that long steel-pointed missile of English manufacture. The "Atlanta" has two magazines, one fore and one aft, well protected, and upon opening one of them five hundred rounds of ammunition was found in it. The other magazine is supposed to contain the same amount and, indeed, her officers say that she has on board one thousand rounds. When you consider that one hundred rounds is a ship's regular armament, you cannot but conclude that the "Atlanta's" cruise intended some damage. She had also, in addi-

tion, a plentiful supply of torpedoes, cutlasses, boarding pikes, guns, revolvers, &c. Her armament is truly gigantic.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR.

She has inside three decks; first, the gun-deck, one hundred feet long by forty wide; immediately below this is a deck one hundred and eighty feet long, which is subdivided into Captain's cabin, aft, the ward-room, the petty officers' quarters, and forward the men's quarters. Below this deck is the third, the orlop deck, in which are stored all the stores, provisions, &c. Immediately fore and aft of this deck are the magazines. The engines and their necessary complements, of course occupy the centre of the vessel.—These engines are the same which were in her when she ran the blockade as the old "Fingal." They were built on the Clyde, and are models for their beauty and action.

#### THE ARMOR OF THE "ATLANTA."

First and on the outside were the wrought iron bars, six inches wide by two inches thick, running perpendicularly with her side, and properly secured, both above and below, by rivets and bolts. Across these bars, horizontally, and on the inside, ran bars of like material and pattern, fastened to the outside layer by the strongest rivets. Within this layer, and fastened to it, were six thicknesses of live oak two inch plank also, running perpendicularly and horizontally, and again within these were three more similar thicknesses of Georgia pine plank, forming the last series of her armor—You will thus see that her armor is twenty-two inches thick, and presenting all the solidity which could be given it by four inches of wrought iron, twelve inches of live oak, and six inches of Georgia pine.

Her port holes however, were made especially strong. Extra layers of iron and plank, so that the embrasure measures, from the inside to the outside, forty inches. These port holes were a foot and a-half long by one foot in width, and were protected by wrought iron shutters, formed by two transverse layers of iron bars, of the same dimensions as those which compose her armor. These shutters hung upon a pivot, firmly adjusted over the port hole, and were raised or lowered by a small chain which, being attached to the side of each shutter, ran through a small aperture into the gun-deck.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE PILOT-HOUSE.

Forward of the smoke stack was an elevation on the top deck, to all appearances like as a cone; upon this cone was a small square look-out, just large enough on the inside to allow a man's head to turn with freedom. On each side of this look-out were two large apertures, in the shape of parallelograms, slanting towards the interior, and presenting to the pilot's optics in the look-out, two look-outs, an inch and a-half long by an inch wide. This look-out was of wrought iron, four inches thick, and the cone upon which it stood was the same thickness, with this additional strength, however, that the interior of the pilot-house being square, the interstices between the sides of the upper part of the pilot-house and the concave surface of the cone were filled with eight inch, square, live-oak blocks. From the top of the look-out to the base of the cone was but two feet and a-half, so that the pilot exposed only about one-third of his person, the rest of the pilot house being within the body of the ship, and reached by a step-ladder from the gun-deck. The second shot from the "Weehawken," although it was a glancing one, wrenched off this look-out and smashed in the cone. From this pilot-house were seven speaking tubes connecting with their appropriate rooms below, and all properly lettered and numbered, so that the man at the wheel can readily communicate with those below.

### OUTSIDE DIMENSIONS OF THE "ATLANTA."

Her length from bow to stern-post is 180 feet. The gun-deck covering is at its base 100 feet long and 40 feet in width, and at its top about 80 feet in length by 14 feet in breadth. You will thus see that her roof does not slope all the way up, but has a very respectable top deck. From the gun-deck to the roof the perpendicular height is 6 feet, and the sides of the roof sloping at an angle of 45 degrees, the standing height is 8 feet. The lower edge of the roof is 20 inches above water mark, so that she stands above the water about 8 feet. From her aft roof edge it is 40 feet to the stern-post, and from her fore roof edge it is also 40 feet to her bow. The distance from her gun-deck to her keel is 16 feet and a fraction over. Her steering apparatus is perfect and her rudder completely submerged in the water, thereby being in the safest place imaginable. Her iron plating extends two feet below the water line.

### THE TORPEDO ARRANGEMENT.

It is evident that the Rebels have taught us a good lesson on the torpedo subject, as connected with iron-clads, from which we may well afford to learn. It has been a question how a torpedo could be safely carried in front of a vessel without interfering with its steering and other movements, and be at the same time secure from explosion until the proper time. The "Atlanta's" torpedo gearing solves the question. The forward part of the ram of the "Atlanta" is solid iron, 20 feet in length, and so overlaid by steel bars, with their ends protruding below the cut-water, that a huge steel saw is formed, which would cut any wooden gun-boat in existence. This ram at its bow end comes to a point, if I may so call it, about eight inches square.

From the deck of this iron ram, just ahead of its juncture with the vessel, arises a strong iron bar with a pivot at the top, to which is attached a massive iron boom which runs just over the ram's prow, and then forming an elbow, it descends three feet below the water-line, where it forms another elbow, and then running out some two feet it forms at its end a powerful socket or ring. In this socket is firmly inserted another iron boom, which extends beyond the socket eighteen feet, and at its end is hung the torpedo, all capped and ready for the explosion. From this cap runs an insulated wire along the boom and ending in the pilot house, where are necessary electrical arrangements with which the pilot can explode the torpedo as soon as it is run under a vessel. You can hardly conceive of a more perfect or efficient engine of destruction than such a torpedo, and thus carried. The iron ram also is savage enough in its appearance, and would saw a hole in a wooden vessel without much difficulty.

### THE EXTENT OF THIS VICTORY.

Such is but a feeble description of the Rebel ram "Atlanta," which Capt. John Rodgers has the honor to present to the Government. She is certainly superior in many respects, to any ram yet built. She is a very fast vessel. She came into the harbor yesterday, in a heavy sea, making seven knots an hour, and our officers, as well as her own, say she can, in ordinary weather, make eleven knots easily.

The "Nahant" did not get up to the scene of action until the surrender had been made, so that much to the regret of Commodore Downs, he was not able to contribute in a positive manner, to the victory, although he made every endeavor to bring the "Nahant" up into action. The "Atlanta" is certainly the most valuable prize taken during the war. By this victory Capt. Rodgers has endeared himself more than ever to a loyal people. Long life and success to Capt. Rodgers, and the valiant crew of the "Weehawken."



# Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, FOOT OF WASHINGTON STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

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This Institution was organized May 27th, 1861, being the first and largest of the kind in the country.

Supported entirely by Voluntary Contributions from the people, it has furnished Refreshments to nearly *Four Hundred Thousand* Soldiers in going to and returning from the Seat of War. Since the Enlargement of the Building, there is ample room at the tables to accommodate twelve hundred men.

The Hospital attached to this Saloon, where over five thousand patients have received medical attention, was established before any of the Government Hospitals in this city.

The labor of the Committee being gratuitous, and large contributions of provisions having been received, the entire outlay, including building, and all incidental expenses, has not exceeded *Thirty-five Thousand Dollars*.

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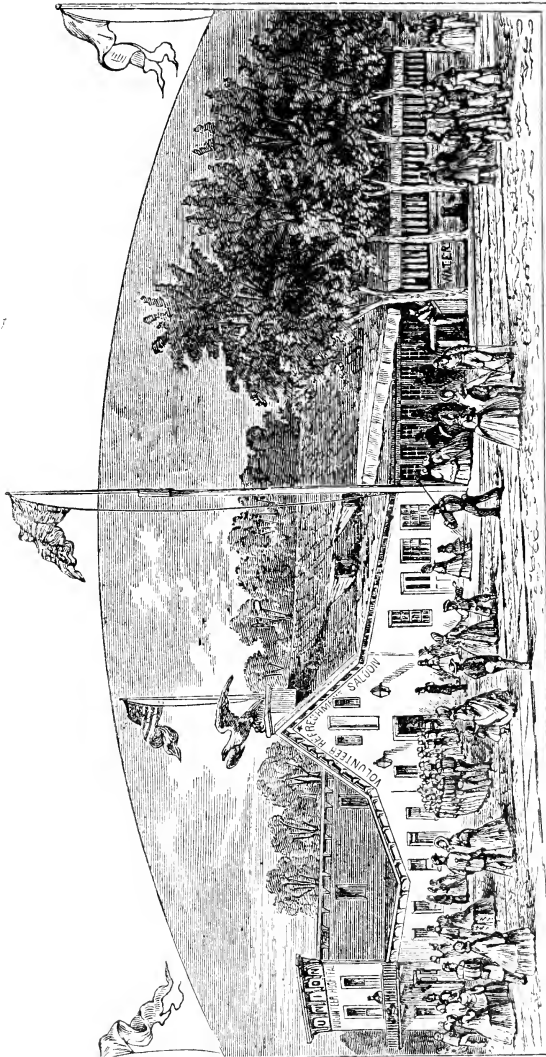
### COMMITTEE OF GENTLEMEN.

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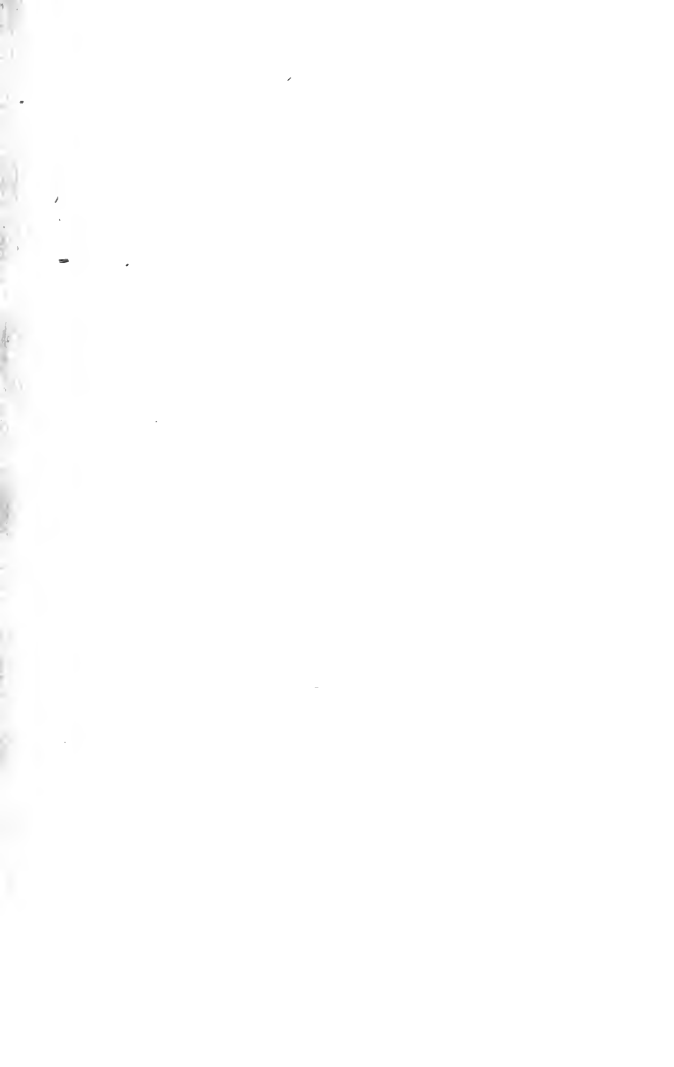
### COMMITTEE OF LADIES.

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\* Deceased.



View of the Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, Foot of Washington Street, Philadelphia.











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